

Blanchette et les **Sept Petits Cajuns** **A Cajun Snow White**

By
Sheila Hébert-Collins

Illustrated by
Patrick Soper



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“Black as *nuit* her hair does flow,
lips *très rouge*, and skin like snow.
Blanchette is the fairest I know, as
far as the bayous flow.”

Imagine how shocked the evil
voodoo queen Marie Gaudet is to
learn that she is no longer the fairest
in the Honey Island Swamp! So
begins this Cajun retelling of *Snow
White and the Seven Dwarfs*. Lured from
her home at Armand Plantation,
Blanchette wanders the dangerous
swamp until she is rescued by seven
little Cajuns named Hébert, Mouton,
Trahan, Broussard, Hollier, Comeaux,
and Préjean.

This is the fifth collaboration by the
author and illustrator of *'T Pousette et
'T Poulette: A Cajun Hansel and Gretel*,
Cendrillon: A Cajun Cinderella, *Jolie
Blonde and the Three Héberts: A Cajun
Twist to an Old Tale*, and *Les Trois
Cochons*. Children will love following
Blanchette's adventures; and the whole
family will enjoy a recipe for delicious
jambalaya, just like Blanchette pre-
pares for the seven little Cajuns!

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In loving memory of Anthony ("Tony") McLin

Special thanks to Angie McMorris Cornett and her eighth-grade class of 2000 at Frost Elementary in Livingston Parish, Louisiana, for their contributions to this story. Never forget your Cajun roots and continue to write with Cajun pride!

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Summary: A Cajun version of Snow White that features a vain voodoo queen, seven little Cajuns living in a cypress tree, and a handsome plantation owner. Includes pronunciations and translations of Cajun words and a recipe for Blanchette's Chicken and Sausage Jambalaya.

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BLANCHETTE ET LES SEPT PETITS CAJUNS

A Cajun Snow White

Once upon a time in the Louisiana swamplands, there lived a woman known for her voodoo powers, *Marie Gaudet*. She lived in a cypress hut deep in Honey Island Swamp, where many visited her everyday for some of her *gris gris*.

Marie Gaudet (mah ree go day) Cajun-French name
gris gris (gree gree) magic





Everyday Marie would gather the secret ingredients to make the magic potion that kept her young and beautiful: two possum feet, an egret beak, a frog tongue, and eyes of a moccasin. She'd cook it up, drink a cup, then walk over to the murky waters of Honey Island Swamp and say, "Bayou, bayou, hear my plea. Who's the fairest maiden in the land of the cypress tree?"



The foggy bayou replied:
“*Marie Gaudet* is the fairest I know,
as far as the bayous flow.”

But on a day that *Marie Gaudet* will never forget, the murky waters spoke of her worst fear:

“Black as *nuit* her hair does flow,
lips *très rouge*, and skin like snow.
Blanchette is the fairest I know,
as far as the bayous flow.”

nuit (nwee) night

très rouge (tray rooj) very red

Blanchette (blôn shet) “*blanche*”=French for white



Marie screamed her most terrible scream, called all her creatures of the swamp, and commanded, "Find this *Blanchette* and lead her into my swamp to die." The creatures searched all the plantations around Honey Island Swamp.

Finally, they came upon Armand Plantation, where they found *Blanchette*. With the help of *Marie's* *gris gris*, the swamp creatures lured her deep into the swamp where she could never find her way home. They all rushed back to *Marie* to tell her of *Blanchette's* fate.



Pauvre bête, Blanchette wandered about the dark swamp, knowing she would soon be eaten up by swamp creatures, but they all were entranced by her beauty. They only wanted to help her and led her to Cypress Cove, to a large cypress tree covered with moss. Hidden beneath the moss was a little door. *Blanchette* opened the door and found a cute little home. There was a *petite table à manger* made from a cypress stump, with seven little cypress knees for chairs. *La table* was piled high with dirty gumbo bowls and the sink piled high with pots. Her first thought was to clean up, so these *bien petite* people would let her *faire la veillée*.



pauvre bête (poov bet) poor thing

petite table à manger (p'teet tahb ah môn jhay) little dining table

la table (lah tahb) the table

bien petite (bee yehn p'teet) very little

faire la veillée (fair lah vay yay) stay late into the night





After cleaning, *Blanchette* was *bien fatigué*, so she looked around for a bed to *faire dodo*. She found *sept petits* moss beds, each one with a name carved on top. There was one for *Hébert*, *Mouton*, *Trahan*, *Broussard*, *Hollier*, *Comeaux*, and *Préjean*.

"Surely these cute little Cajuns will welcome me into their home," she thought. She snuggled into *Préjean's* bed and fell asleep.

bien fatigué (bee yehn fah tee gay) very tired

faire dodo (fair doedoe) go to sleep

sept (set) seven

petit (p'teet) small

Hébert (A bear), *Mouton* (Moo tôn), *Trahan* (Trôn hôn),

Broussard (Broo sard), *Hollier* (Ohl yay), *Comeaux* (Koe moe),

Préjean (Pray zhôn) French names



De bon matin, the *sept petits* Cajuns came home from their night of hunting gators. They were surprised to see their home neat and tidy. They washed up, ate some good, fried alligator, then headed for bed. When *Préjean* saw *Blanchette*, he called to his friends. They all watched as she slept.



When *Blanchette* awoke, she told the little Cajuns how she came to be there. *Les petits* Cajuns agreed that *Marie Gaudet* must be at the bottom of this and begged *Blanchette* to stay with them forever so they could protect her. *Blanchette* agreed.

de bon matin (der bôn mah tehn) early in the morning



Everyday *Blanchette* cooked her *petits amis* their favorites, jambalaya or gumbo, and then off they went into the swamp. *Préjean* would remind her, “Do not open *la porte*. *Marie* will surely be looking for you, *sha*.”

petits amis (p'teet zah me) little friends

la porte (lah port) the door

sha (sha) from the French word, “cher,” meaning darling



Avant longtemps, Marie called for her swamp creatures to prepare her potion. She cooked it up then drank a cup. Marie then walked to the murky bayou waters of Honey Island Swamp and asked, "Bayou, bayou, hear my plea. Who's the fairest maiden in the land of the cypress tree?"

The bayou waters rose and replied:

"Marie, Marie, you are fair, but no, no.

Blanchette is the fairest as far as the bayous flow.

With *sept petits* Cajuns she will be,
living in Cypress Cove in a cypress tree."



avant longtemps (ah vôn lôn tôn) after a while



Again, *Marie* screamed her most terrible scream and called for her swamp creatures. "Prepare my potion," she commanded. "I will fix that *Blanchette* myself." Two possum feet, an egret beak, a frog tongue, and eyes from a moccasin . . . but this time *Marie* added a spell. "Potion, potion, that I need, disguise me for my evil deed." *Marie* drank the potion and was transformed into an old Cajun maw-maw. "Now, I will make a batch of poison *beignets* that no one can resist."



beignets (been yay) square doughnuts with powdered sugar



Marie's swamp creatures led her to the moss-covered cypress tree. She knocked *à la porte* then called out, "*Bonsoir, mes petits amis*. I live nearby and brought by a batch of *beignets*." *Blanchette* called out that she could not open *la porte* but she would surely love to have some *beignets*. So *Marie* put them on the window ledge and left, feeling sure that the *beignets* would be eaten.

Bonsoir, mes petits amis. (Bôn swah, may p'teet zah me.)
Good evening, my little friends.

Sure enough, *Blanchette* quickly bit into those delicious *beignets*, and fell to the floor, lifeless.





When *les petits* Cajuns came home from their gator hunt, they found *Blanchette*, lifeless. They watched her and cried for three days. Finally, *Préjean* said, “*Mon dieu*, she is still so beautiful. We can certainly not bury her in that cold ground. Let’s build a glass box for her and keep it beneath her favorite magnolia tree.” And it was done. They visited her everyday.


mon dieu (môn dyu) my goodness



One day, a rich plantation owner, *André Cossé*, came upon the glass box while hunting in the swamp. He sat beside it, entranced by *Blanchette's* beauty.

André Cossé (Ôn dray Coe say) French name





When *les petits* Cajuns discovered him there, they were upset, but they soon realized that he loved her as much as they did. *Monsieur Cossé* begged them to let him take her to *Docteur Brière*, the finest doctor in New Orleans. *Les petits* Cajuns agreed because they didn't want to believe *Blanchette* was really dead.

monsieur (m'syuhr) mister
Docteur Brière (Dawk tur Bree air) French name

Les sept petits Cajuns helped lift the glass box into *Monsieur Cossé's pirogue*, and as they did, a piece of poison *beignet* fell out of *Blanchette's* mouth. *Blanchette* awoke! *Les petits Cajuns* opened the glass box and *Blanchette* stood up slowly, then asked, "*Mais, quoi qu'est arrivé?*"

Les petits Cajuns told *Blanchette* what had happened and that they felt sure it was *Marie's* evil doing.



pirogue (pee roh) small flat-bottom boat
Mais, quoi qu'est arrivé? (Mehn, qwahs tah ee vay?)
Well, what's happened?

Suddenly, *Monsieur Cossé* fell to his knees and said, "Marry me and I will protect you forever."

Blanchette fell instantly in love. She kissed *les petits Cajuns* *au revoir* and promised to come back to *faire la veillée*.

au revoir (oh rev wah) good-bye



Marie had heard about *André Cossé's* wedding. She was determined to attend the wedding of the richest plantation owner in all of Cypress Cove to see for herself if his bride was beautiful. So she prepared a special potion to make her even more beautiful: four possum feet, two egret beaks, a nutria tongue, and eyes of moccasin. She cooked it up and drank a cup. She walked to the murky bayou waters and once more asked, "Bayou, bayou, hear my plea. Who is the fairest maiden in the land of the cypress tree?"

The bayou waters rose and replied:

 "Black as *nuit*, her hair does flow,
 lips *très rouge*, and skin like snow.
 Blanchette, the bride of *André Cossé*,
 is the fairest maiden I know, as far as the bayous flow."





Marie screamed her most terrible scream, fainted into the murky swamp waters, and was never seen again.

Blanchette married *André Cossé* that very day. *Les petits Cajuns* walked *Blanchette* down the aisle. *Blanchette* and *André* lived happily ever after, deep in Honey Island Swamp, where her *petite enfants* could see their *sept petits parrains* every day.

C'est tout!

petite enfants (p'teet on fôn) little children
parrains (pah rehn) godfathers
C'est tout! (Say too!) That's all!





BLANCHETTE'S CHICKEN-AND-SAUSAGE JAMBALAYA

Origin of Jambalaya: Legend tells of how a well-to-do guest arrived late at a New Orleans inn, wanting dinner. The proprietor turned to his chef and said, “*Jean, balayez*,” meaning “blend some good things together.” The guest was delighted with the results and asked what it was called. The proprietor said, “*Jean, balayez*.” From then on, many ordered “*Jean, balayez*.” In time, the words were run together and became known as *Jambalaya*.

2 lbs. deboned chicken pieces	2 garlic cloves, chopped
1 lb. smoked pork sausage, sliced	1 can (8 oz.) tomato sauce
$\frac{1}{4}$ cup oil	2 tbsp. parsley, chopped
1 tsp. Tony's Creole Seasoning	2 tbsp. green-onion tops, chopped
2 tsp. salt	4 cups rice, cooked
2 celery ribs, chopped	2 large onions, chopped
$\frac{1}{2}$ cup bell pepper, chopped	

Directions: Heat oil in a large, thick pot on medium-high heat. Add chicken, brown, and cook 20 minutes. Add sausage, seasoning, and salt. Cover and cook on low heat for 30 minutes. Remove sausage and chicken. Add onion, celery, bell pepper, and garlic and sauté until tender. Stir in tomato sauce and return chicken and sausage to the pot. Cover and simmer about 10 minutes. Add onion tops and parsley and cook covered for 5 minutes. Fold in cooked rice and simmer about 10 minutes. Serve with French bread and coleslaw. *Bon appétit!*



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Sheila Hébert-Collins, a native of Abbeville, Louisiana, has enormous pride in her Cajun heritage. Listed on the Louisiana State Artist Roster as an author and Cajun storyteller, she often makes appearances in schools throughout the state. Her other books are *'T Pousette et 'T Poulette: A Cajun Hansel and Gretel*, *Cendrillon: A Cajun Cinderella*, *Jolie Blonde and the Three Héberts*, *Les Trois Cochons*, and *Petite Rouge: A Cajun Twist to an Old Tale*, all published by Pelican.

Award-winning artist Patrick Soper lives in Lafayette, Louisiana. He has also illustrated *Cajun Folktales*, *Contes Populaires Cadiens*, *Mardi Gras in the Country*, and *A Christmas Dictionary*, all published by Pelican.



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